

War of 1812: The Unfinished Revolution

The War of 1812 represents the definitive end of the American Revolution. Although 30 years had passed since the end of the revolution, the British continued to restrict trade, impress American sailors and occupy territories in North America.



President James Madison

On June 18, 1812, President James Madison and the Congressional "war hawks" declared war even though America was illprepared to fight the British due



British ships in a naval engagement on the Chesapeake Bay.

to poor coastal defenses, financial problems and a disorganized military. The early war years saw the defeat of the American military as it entered Canada and the successful British blockade of the U.S. coastline.

Throughout 1813 and 1814, the British campaigned in the Chesapeake Bay because of its importance as the American center of government as the nation's capital was relocated here in 1800. It was also an important economic center. The excellent soil, favorable climate and navigable waters of the Bay region provided for agricultural and slave economies. The port of Baltimore, the third largest city in the nation, supported the ship building industry, international trade and became the home of privateering, the practice of private licensed ships attacking enemy vessels.

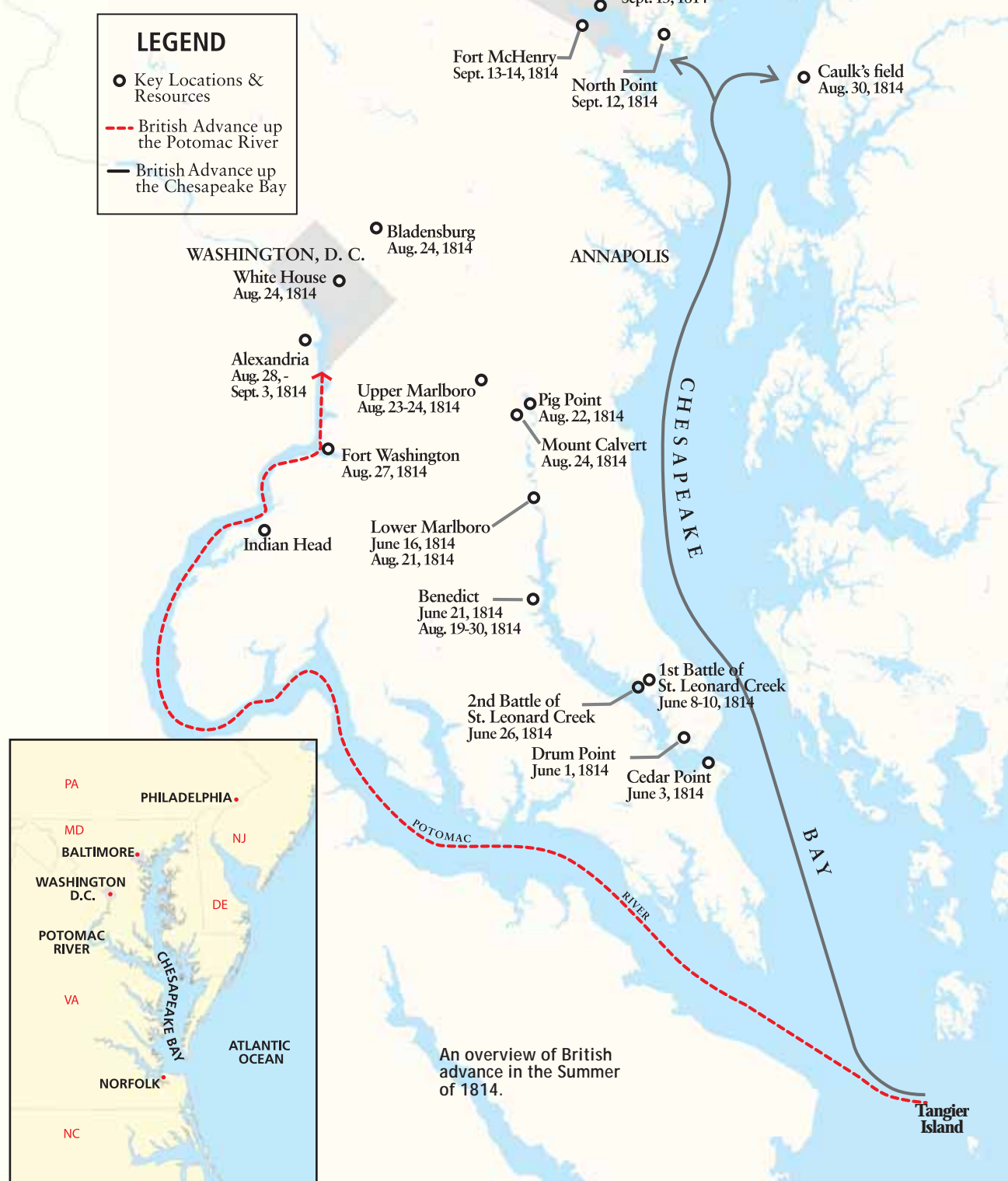
The August-September 1814 British Campaign on the Chesapeake comprised of a naval duel with the Chesapeake Flotilla; the burning of Washington, D.C.; and a combined land-sea attack on Baltimore. Unlike Washington, D.C., Baltimore prepared earthworks, gun batteries and fortifications. Also unlike Washington, the Americans stood strong in defense and repelled the British assault overland and naval bombardment.

The victory in Baltimore on September 12-14, 1814 and the publication of a national song "The Star-Spangled Banner" provided inspiration to the struggling nation. With additional American victories along the Canadian border, both nations signed the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war on December 24, 1814.



Signing of the Treaty of Ghent

1814 Battle Sites



Battle of North Point



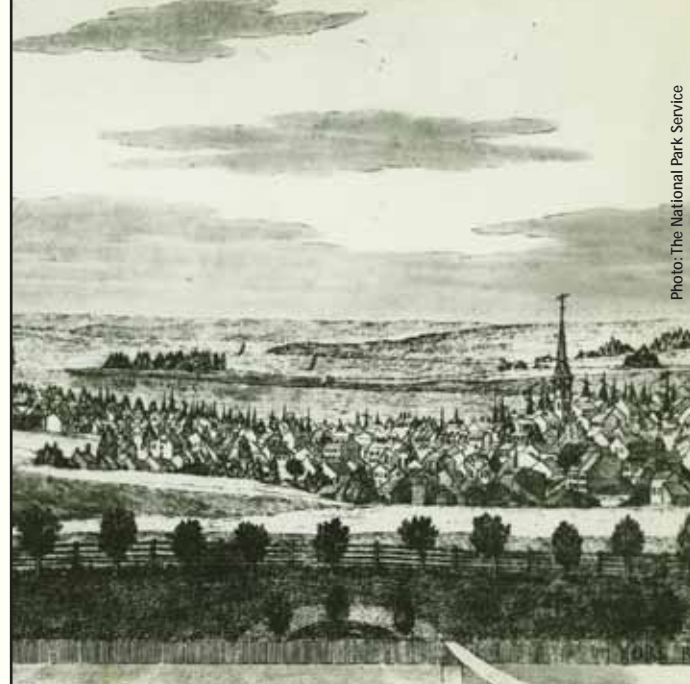
Brigadier General John Stricker

On September 12, 1814, General John Stricker learned that the British were landing at North Point. In response, he positioned 3,200 American militiamen between Bear Creek and Back River to block their route to Baltimore. The landing was part of a British two-pronged land-sea attack on the city. During breakfast at a local farmhouse, British General Robert Ross boasted that on that evening, "I'll sup in Baltimore tonight—or in hell." Soon afterward, he was killed by sharpshooters in a skirmish before the main battle. After a fierce two-hour engagement, Colonel Arthur Brooke, who replaced Ross, ordered a flanking maneuver. The American left flank collapsed and Stricker ordered a retreat back to Baltimore. The British had won the battle but the Americans had made them pay. The British losses exceeded the Americans with 46 dead and 295 wounded, while the American toll was 24 dead and 139 wounded.



5th Maryland Regiment, Battle of North Point, September 12, 1814

All Hearts and Hands



The rooftops of Baltimore, a thriving port-town, whose residents ably came to her defense.

From the docks, rooftops, farms and hills of Maryland's tide-water, citizens witnessed the sounds and sights of battle and armies on the march. Each did their part for patriotism, survival or profit; a flag maker, blacksmiths, laborers, carpenters, merchants, farmers, seamen, bankers all formed a collective unity that prompted a citizen to comment, "All hearts and hands have cordially united in the common cause."

On September 30, 1814 citizen-soldier George Douglas, a private in the Baltimore Fencibles, wrote to a Boston friend, "I give you joy, my dear friend; after a tremendous conflict we have got rid of the enemy... Baltimore has maintained its honor... against the enemy with spirit, bravery and unanimity, all of which has been shown in the memorable days and nights of the 12th, 13th and 14th of September 1814..." At war's end, the French minister commented "...the war has given the Americans what they so essentially lacked, a national character founded on a glory common to all..."

Mary Pickersgill



Mary Pickersgill

In August 1813 as Baltimore prepared for war, Major George Armistead, Commander of Fort McHenry wrote that "it is my desire to have a flag so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance." Flag maker Mary Pickersgill was given the task of assembling two flags, a 30-foot by 42-foot garrison flag and a 17-foot by 25-foot storm flag. Having learned her craft from her mother who made flags for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, Mary sewed the flags in just six weeks inside her home, which still stands today. The flags were so large that she took them to a nearby warehouse to complete the job. On the morning of September 14, 1814, after the bombardment by British ships, Francis Scott Key was inspired to write that "the flag was still there" in the famous poem that became our National Anthem. The flag is on display in the National Museum of American History. In 1907, the flag was bequeathed to the Smithsonian Institution by the Armistead family.



The Star-Spangled Banner is born.

Francis Scott Key



Francis Scott Key witnessing the bombardment of Fort McHenry.

For nearly 200 years the words of "The Star-Spangled Banner" have been the inspirational epitaph of a Maryland lawyer who had witnessed "the rockets red glare" over Fort McHenry in September 1814.

A native of Frederick, Maryland, Key was asked to obtain the release of a friend being held captive aboard a British warship soon after the capture of Washington, D.C. Securing his friend's release, Key was detained until after the attack on Baltimore. His words, wedded to an old English melody, were soon published and became instantly well-known, as did the author. His only public reference to the song came years later in a speech in Frederick:

"Then, in that hour of deliverance and joyful triumph, my heart spoke; 'Does not such a country, and such defenders of their country, deserve a song?' was its question... Let the praise, then, if any be due, be given, not to me, who only did what I could not help doing; not to the writer, but to the inspirers of the song."

The Burning of Washington

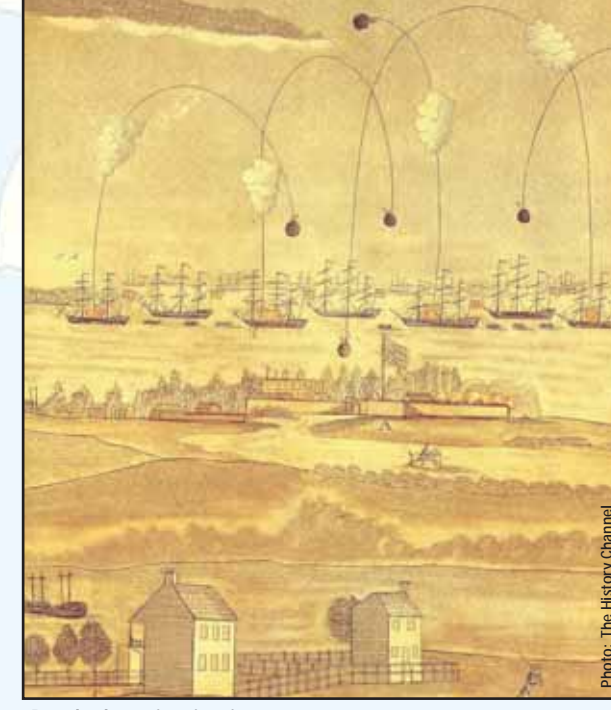
On August 19, 1814, 50 British warships entered the Chesapeake Bay and landed their expeditionary army of 4,500 troops at Benedict, Maryland. Within five days, these troops had destroyed an American gun boat flotilla and defeated the American army at Bladensburg, Maryland. The Battle of Bladensburg lasted four hours and in the end the American militia retreated "like sheep chased by dogs" into the Virginia and Maryland countryside. The victorious British continued their advance into Washington, D.C.

In retaliation for the burning of York, the provincial capital of Canada, Major General Ross ordered the government buildings to be burned in Washington, D.C. President James and Dolley Madison fled separately, narrowly escaping capture. As Dolley Madison left the White House, she saved the original draft of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington. In Baltimore, 40 miles away, the fiery glow of the capital could be seen. Because of the destruction, the American capital was temporarily moved to Brooklandville, Maryland.



The burning of the White House [President's house]

Bombardment of Fort McHenry



"Bombs bursting in air..."

On September 13, 1814, British Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane ordered the Royal Navy to attack Fort McHenry. The fort, commanded by Major George Armistead, defended the entrance to Baltimore's harbor. The British planned to pound the fort into submission and then assist their army in an assault on the well-prepared American entrenchments east of the city. In a 25-hour barrage, the British fired more than 1,500 mortar bombs and Congreve rockets at the fort, but were unable to drive the men off or silence the guns. A final naval effort to attack the fort from the west with twenty longboats packed with 1,200 Royal Marines was also stopped by the men and guns of Battery Babcock, Forts Lookout and Fort Covington. Having been repulsed in these three separate attacks, the British commander ordered a withdrawal early on the morning of September 14, 1814. The Battle for Baltimore was over.

Outcomes of the 1814 Chesapeake Campaign

The war had served as a crucial test for a young democratic government. Unprepared for war, under-financed, threatened by secession and acts of treason, America narrowly survived the challenge of foreign invasion. America's victory over Great Britain confirmed our independence; established clear boundaries between Canada and the U.S.; and ended trade restrictions. In 1814, Americans took pride in their victory at the Battle for Baltimore. The flag and the song—which later became the National Anthem—came to symbolize the nation. For the first time, many Americans began to think about what it meant to be an American and a sovereign nation.

The War of 1812 and especially the British Chesapeake campaigns of 1813 and 1814, generated several Congressional debates on issues such as moving the capital; American southern dependence on slavery compromising the strength of the economy, which raised further questions about the institution; our inadequate coastal defenses, the volunteer state militia and maintaining a regular army and navy. All of these issues became important for the nation to consider as it looked westward and extended its economic trade to the world.

In the post-war generations, American popular media prompted an outgrowth of myths, stories, and legends that continue today. Foremost is the folklore surrounding the original Star-Spangled Banner and its author; the origin of "Uncle Sam"; the origins of "Old Ironsides"; and First Lady Dolley Madisons saving Washington's portrait by Gilbert Stuart and original copies of both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. All of these factual events have become part of our American folklore.



First Lady, Dolley Madison



How to Use This Guide

This guide depicts a 100-mile scenic and historic driving tour that follows the route taken by British Marines as they invaded the Chesapeake Bay region during the summer of 1814. Sites along the red-line driving trail highlight the events leading up to the Battle for Baltimore, which inspired Francis Scott Key to write the words that would become our National Anthem.

The trail can be driven in one, two or three days depending on traveler preference. Destinations like Leonardtown, Solomons, Upper Marlboro, Havre de Grace and Elkton offer a charming ambiance that can be enjoyed all-year long, while Baltimore has all the sophistication of a large urban destination. Recreational activities such as hiking, biking, paddling, wildlife viewing and beach-combing are available throughout the region. Amenities include dining, lodging, shopping, and a variety of attractions that highlight Maryland's important role in the War of 1812. For more detailed travel information, visit www.mdwelcome.org, or stop by any Maryland Welcome Center, local visitor center or contact any of the organizations listed in this guide.

Many of the sites are also part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, a partnership system of over 140 parks, wildlife refuges, museums, historic communities and land and water trails in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Gateways are the places to experience and learn about the Chesapeake. For more information on the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, visit www.baygateways.net or call 866-229-9297.



Kayakers paddling on one of the many water trails within the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

Star-Spangled Banner Trail Revisited



Fort McHenry National Monument & Historic Shrine

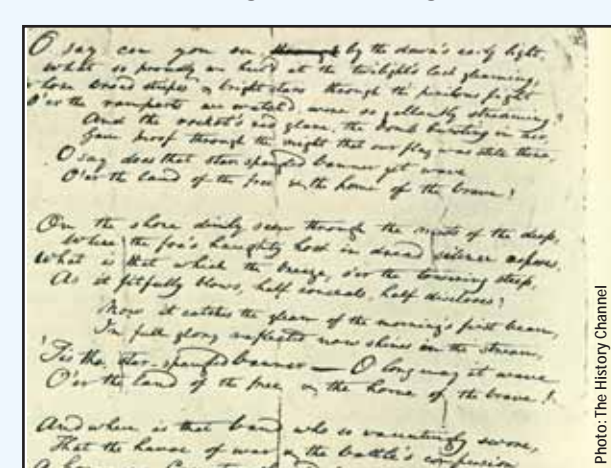
- Maryland Office of Tourism Development**
217 East Redwood Street
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Baltimore, MD 21202
800-MDISUP (634-7386)
800-766-3386
www.visitmaryland.org
- Annapolis & Anne Arundel County Conference & Visitors Bureau**
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Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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- Baltimore Area Convention & Visitors Association**
Baltimore Visitor Center
401 Light Street
Inner Harbor West Shore
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877-BALTIMORE
www.baltimore.org
- Baltimore County Conference & Visitors Bureau**
P.O. Box 5426
Lutherville, MD 21094-5426
877-STAR/ND (783-9636)
www.visitbacomd.com
- Calvert County Department of Economic Development & Tourism**
175 Main Street, Courthouse
Prince Frederick, MD 20678
410-535-4583; 800-331-9771
www.eccalvert.com
- Cecil County Tourism**
6292 Seahawk Dr., Suite 114
North East, MD 21901
800-CECIL-95
www.seececil.org
info@seececil.org
- Charles County Office of Tourism**
P.O. Box 2150
LaPlata, Maryland 20646
410-228-1000
800-522-TOUR (8687)
www.tourdorchester.org
- Dorchester County Tourism**
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Cambridge, Maryland 21613
410-228-1000
800-522-TOUR (8687)
www.tourdorchester.org
- Harford County Tourism Council, Inc.**
211 W. Bel Air Avenue
Aberdeen, Maryland 21001
800-597-2649
harfordtourism@msn.com
www.harfordmd.com
- Kent County Tourism Development Office**
400 High Street, 2nd Floor
Chestertown, Maryland 21620
410-778-0416
www.kentcountymd.com
- Prince George's County, Maryland Conference & Visitors Bureau, Inc.**
9200 Basil Court, Suite 101
Largo, MD 20774-5342
301-925-8300
visitorinfo@co.pg.md.us
- Queen Anne's County Office of Tourism**
425 Piney Narrows Road
Chestertown, Maryland 21619
410-604-2100
www.discovequeenannes.com
- St. Mary's County Division of Tourism**
P.O. Box 653
Leonardtown, MD 20650
800-327-9023
301-475-4200 ext. 1404
www.stmarysmd.com/tourism
- Talbot County Office of Tourism**
11 S. Harrison Street
Easton, Maryland 21601
410-770-8000
www.tourtalbot.org
- Calvert Marine Museum**
14150 Solomons Island Road
Solomons, MD 20688
410-326-2042
www.calvertmarinemuseum.com
- The Flag House & Star-Spangled Banner Museum**
844 East Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
410-837-1793
www.flaghouse.org
- Fort McHenry National Monument & Historic Shrine**
National Park Service
2400 East Fort Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-962-4290
www.nps.gov/fomc
- National Museum of American History**
Constitution Ave. between 12th-14th Street
Washington, DC 20004
202-633-1000
www.si.edu
- North Point State Park**
9000 Bay Shore Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21219
410-592-2897
www.dnr.maryland.gov

Birth of the National Anthem

On August 25, 1814, as the British army returned to their ships, they took prisoner, Dr. William Beanes, a prominent citizen from Upper Marlboro. The British held the doctor captive aboard ship, as friends sought Maryland attorney, Francis Scott Key, to secure his release. On September 7th, Key and John S. Skinner, a U.S. agent in charge of prisoner exchange, boarded the ship, where five days later, they helplessly witnessed the attack on Baltimore.

As dawn broke on the morning of September 14, 1814, all eyes were upon Fort McHenry. The guns were silent and the rain had dissipated. As the British fleet withdrew, Major Armistead lowered Fort McHenry's tattered storm flag and raised a larger U.S. flag. It was at that very moment that Key realized the fort had not surrendered and Baltimore had withstood the assaults. Key was so moved by what he saw, he scribbled his emotions as a poem on an envelope he had been carrying with him.

Two days later, Key, Beanes and Skinner were released from British custody and returned to Baltimore, where on September 20, 1814, the song was first published and distributed throughout the city as a handbill. It became instantly popular and remained so throughout the 19th century. On March 3, 1931, "The Star-Spangled Banner" became our official National Anthem through an act of Congress.



A verse of the original Star-Spangled Banner, on display at the Maryland Historical Society.

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER TRAIL
War of 1812 Chesapeake Campaign

www.visitmaryland.org
Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor

For more information on this and other trails, call toll-free: (866) 772-1812

Chesapeake Connection
CHESAPEAKE BAY GATEWAYS NETWORK